

## Abraham Lincoln papers

Abraham Lincoln Message to Congress, Second Printed Draft with Changes in Lincoln's Hand<sup>1</sup>, [June or July 1861]

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<sup>1</sup> In preparing his Message to Congress, Lincoln probably began by writing down ideas in the form of notes or trial passages. At least one of these is known to have survived (see Draft Fragment, Message to Congress, July 4, 1861 [May?, 1861]). At some point he composed a handwritten draft of 25 pages, which he then expanded to 40. (see Message to Congress, July 4, 1861, Handwritten Draft, [May or June, 1861]). He then had this handwritten draft printed and proceeded to make further revisions (see Message to Congress, July 4, 1861, First Printed Draft, [May or June 1861]). Finally, he had this newly revised version printed and made additional changes. It is this second printed version, with Lincoln's handwritten changes, that follows here, the latest surviving, and possibly the final, draft of the message.

Addressed to the U. S. Congress being summoned to reconvene on July 4, this document was one of the most critical for his presidency of any he ever wrote. "The message which Lincoln presented to the called session of Congress," according to James G. Randall, "stands as one of his most elaborate and carefully prepared papers. It comprised a history of events, a report of stewardship, a constitutional argument, and an exalted commentary on fundamentals." (Lincoln The President: Springfield to Gettysburg, 2 vols. [New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1945], 1:381). There can be no doubt that Lincoln knew how crucial it was to present both to Congress and the nation the harrowing events of the secession crisis in the proper light. That he took great pains with the composition of the message is evident in the conspicuous effort that went into his three surviving drafts. These reveal that Lincoln was keenly aware of the multiple tasks that his message had to perform.

It is not known when Lincoln began working on the message, but there is evidence that he was grappling with the issues early in May. According to his secretary, John G. Nicolay, taking notes at the time, Lincoln discussed the situation with his secretaries, Nicolay and John Hay, on May 7, saying that "the real question involved in it, (as he had about made up his mind, though he should think further about it, while writing his message) was whether a full and representative government had the right and power to protect and maintain itself. Admit the right of a minority to secede at will, and the question for such secession would almost as likely be any other as the slavery question." (Earl Schenck Miers, ed., Lincoln Day by Day, [Washington: Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission, 1960] 3:40)

The survival of a manuscript leaf headed “Random 6” and containing a paragraph that found its way into the Message suggests that Lincoln began by jotting down ideas and potential parts of the Message as it took form in his mind. See Draft Fragment of Message to Congress, July 4, 1861 [May? 1861].

By June he was hard at work on the Message, which came to dominate his attention. Nicolay wrote to a friend on July 3, the day before the Message was to be presented to the Congress: “Since my return from Illinois (June 18) the President has been engaged almost constantly in writing his message, and has refused to receive any calls whatever, either of friendship or business, except from members of the Cabinet, or high officials.” (*Lincoln Day by Day*, 2:51)

Lincoln's dedication to getting his message right shows in the care he took in drafting and revising, in perfecting the arguments and phraseology, as well as the factual details. As with his First Inaugural, he was concerned with striking exactly the right tone. His earliest draft — especially for a man who was usually not comfortable talking about himself — was frankly autobiographical. He described the events and his reactions to them in surprisingly personal terms, using the first person freely in his narration. Because his decisions for dealing with the events had been criticized and second-guessed, he was naturally defensive. Accused, for example, by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of flaunting the law, he responded in his first draft personally: “Even in such a case I should consider my official oath broken if I should allow the government to be overthrown, when I might think the disregarding the single law would tend to preserve it— But, in this case I was not, in my own judgment, driven to this ground— In my opinion I violated no law—”

But later, in revising his arguments, he would shift the emphasis of his defense away from himself: “Even in such a case would not the official oath be broken, if the government should be overthrown, when it was believed that disregarding the single law, would tend to preserve it— But it was not believed that this question was presented. It was not believed that any law was violated”

This, and many similar examples from the drafts, show Lincoln deliberately moving away from the first person in favor of the third person (typically, “the Executive”) or, as above, the passive voice (“It was not believed”). This has the desired effect of focusing attention on the action, rather than the actor.

In the document that follows, the latest surviving draft, Lincoln can be seen fine-tuning his characterization of the Confederacy, making his explanations more concise and direct, adding a welter of commas to establish a cadenced reading, and providing one final reason why secession could not be permitted — to insure that each constituent state had a republican form of

government. The existence in this collection of a copy of this second printed draft with suggested changes by Secretary of State, William H. Seward, make it possible to see that a great many of Lincoln's changes at this stage were prompted by Seward's suggestions (see Message to Congress, July 4, 1861, Second Printed Draft, With Suggested Changes by William H. Seward, [late June or July, 1861]). Unless otherwise identified, such adopted changes have been marked in the notes: (Seward).

MESSAGE.

*Fellow-citizens of the Senate and*

*House of Representatives:*

Having been convened on an extraordinary occasion, as authorized by the Constitution, your attention is not called to any ordinary subject of legislation.

At the beginning of the present presidential term, four months ago, all the functions of the federal government were found to be entirely generally<sup>2</sup> suspended within the several States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida, excepting only those of the Post Office Department.

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2 Lincoln has substituted "generally" for "entirely" (Seward).

Within these States all the forts, arsenals, dock-yards, custom-houses, and the like, including the movable and stationary property in and about them, had been seized, and were held in open hostility to this government, excepting only Forts Pickens, Taylor, and Jefferson, on and near the Florida coast, and Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor, South Carolina. The forts thus seized had been put in improved condition; new ones had been built, and armed forces had been organized, and were organizing, all avowedly with the same hostile purpose.

The forts remaining in the possession of the federal government in and near these States were either besieged or<sup>3</sup> menaced by warlike preparations, and especially Fort Sumter was nearly surrounded by well-protected hostile batteries, with guns equal in quality to the best of its own, and outnumbering the latter as perhaps ten<sup>4</sup> to one. A disproportionate share, both in number and quality, of the federal arms and ammunition, muskets and rifles,<sup>5</sup> had somehow found their way into these States, and had been seized to be used against the government. Accumulations of the public revenue, lying within these States them,<sup>6</sup> had been seized for the same object. The navy was

scattered; and <sup>7</sup> in distant seas; leaving but a very small part of it within the immediate reach of the government. The Officers of the federal army and navy, had resigned in great numbers; and of those resigning, a large proportion had taken up arms against the government. Simultaneously, and in connexion with all this, the purpose to sever the Federal Union was openly avowed. In accordance with this purpose, an ordinance had been adopted in each of these States, declaring the States, respectively, to be separated from the National Union. Also the forms of establishing a federal government of these States, with departments, and provisions, similar to our own, had been gone through; and this supposed federal government, under the name and style of "The Confederate States of America," had assumed national independence, and was suing for its recognition, by the powers of the earth. <sup>8</sup> A formula for instituting a combined government of these states had been promulgated; and this illegal organization, in the character of Confederate states was already invoking recognition, aid, and intervention, from Foreign Powers—

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3 Lincoln here added "either besieged or" (Seward).

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4 Lincoln here added "perhaps ten". In previous drafts he had left this space blank.

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5 Lincoln here substituted "muskets and rifles" for "arms and ammunition".

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6 Lincoln here substituted "them" for "these States" (Seward).

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7 Seward suggested the striking of this "and".

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8 Lincoln struck out the preceding sentence and substituted the one that follows. In so doing, he adopted language that was mostly suggested by Seward.

Finding this condition of things, and believing it to be an imperative duty upon the incoming Executive, to prevent, if possible, the consummation of such attempt to destroy the Federal Union, a choice of means to that end became indispensable. This choice was made, and was declared in the inaugural address. The policy chosen looked to the exhaustion of all peaceful measures, before a resort to any stronger ones. It sought only to hold the public places and property not already wrested from the government, and to collect the revenue; relying for the rest, on time, discussion, and the ballot-box. It promised a continuance of the mails, at government expense, to the very people who were resisting the government; and it gave repeated pledges against any disturbance to any of the people, or any of their rights. Of all that which a President might constitutionally, and justifiably, do in such a case, — everything was forborne, without which, it was believed possible to keep the government on foot.

On the 5th of March, (the present incumbent's first full day in office,) a letter of Major Anderson, commanding at Fort Sumter, written on the 28th of February, and received at the War Department on the 4th of March, was, by that department, placed in his hands. This letter expressed the professional opinion of the writer, that re-enforcements could not be thrown into that fort within the time for his relief, rendered necessary by the limited supply of provisions, and with a view of holding possession of the same, with a force of less than twenty thousand good and well-disciplined men. This opinion was concurred in by all the officers of his command, and their *memoranda* on the subject, were made enclosures of Major Anderson's letter. The whole was immediately laid before Lieutenant General Scott, who at once concurred with Major Anderson in opinion. On reflection, however, he took full time, consulting with other officers, both of the army and the navy, and, at the end of four days, came reluctantly, but decidedly, to the same conclusion as before. He also stated at the same time that no such sufficient force was then at the control of the government, or could be raised and brought to the ground within the time when the provisions in the fort would be exhausted. In a purely military point of view, this reduced the duty of the administration, in the case, to the mere matter of getting the garrison safely out of the fort.

It was believed, however, that to so abandon that position, under the circumstances,<sup>9</sup> would be utterly ruinous; that the *necessity* under which it was to be done would not be fully understood; that by many, it would be construed as a part of a *voluntary* policy; that at home, it would discourage the friends of the Union, embolden its adversaries, and go far to insure to the latter, a recognition of independence<sup>10</sup> abroad; that, in fact, it would be our national destruction consummated. This could not be allowed. Starvation was not yet upon the garrison; and ere it would be reached, Fort Pickens<sup>11</sup> might be re-enforced. This last, would be a clear indication of *policy*, and would better enable the country to accept the evacuation of Fort Sumter, as a military *necessity*. An order was at once directed to be sent for the landing of the troops from the steamship Brooklyn, into Fort Pickens. This order could not go by land, but must take the longer and slower route by sea. The first return news from the order was received just one week before the fall of Fort Sumter. The news itself was, that the officer commanding the Sabine, to which vessel the troops had been transferred from the Brooklyn, acting upon some *quasi* armistice of the late administration, (and of the existence of which the present administration, up to the time the order was despatched, had only too vague and uncertain rumors to fix attention,) had refused to land the troops. To now re-enforce Fort Pickens, before a crisis would be reached at Fort Sumter, was impossible — rendered so by the near exhaustion of provisions in the latter-named fort. In precaution against such a conjuncture, the government had, a few days before, commenced preparing an expedition, as well adapted as might be, to relieve Fort Sumter, which expedition was intended to be ultimately used, or not, according to circumstances. The strongest anticipated case for using it, was now presented; and it was resolved

to send it forward. As had been intended, in this contingency, it was also resolved to notify the governor of South Carolina, that he might expect an attempt would be made to provision the fort; and that, if the attempt should not be resisted, there would be no effort to throw in men, arms, or ammunition, without further notice, or in case of an attack upon the fort. This notice was accordingly given; whereupon the fort was attacked, and bombarded to its fall, without even awaiting the arrival of the provisioning expedition.

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9 Lincoln here added the phrase “under the circumstances,” (Seward).

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10 Striking “of independence” was suggested by Seward.

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11 Lincoln here underlined “Fort Pickens” and wrote “Ital.” in the margin.

It is thus seen that the assault upon, and reduction of, Fort Sumter, was, in no sense, a matter of self defence on the part of the assailants. They well knew that the garrison in the fort could, by no possibility, commit aggression upon them. They knew — they were expressly notified — that the giving of bread to the few brave and hungry men of the garrison, was all which would on that occasion<sup>12</sup> be attempted, unless themselves, by resisting so much, should provoke more. They knew that this government desired to keep the garrison in the fort, not to assail them, but merely to maintain visible possession, and thus to preserve the Union from actual and immediate dissolution — trusting, as herein before stated, to time, discussion, and the ballot-box, for final adjustment; and they assailed, and reduced the fort, for precisely the reverse object — to drive out the visible authority of the federal Union, and thus force it to immediate dissolution. That this was their object, the Executive well understood; and having said to them, in the inaugural address, “You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors,” he took pains, not only to keep this declaration good, but also to keep the case so free from the power of ingenious sophistry, as that the world should not be able to misunderstand it. By the affair at Fort Sumter, with its surrounding circumstances, that point was reached. Then, and thereby, the assailants of the government, began the conflict of arms, without a gun in sight, or in expectancy to return their fire, save only the few in the fort, sent to that harbor, years before, for their own protection, and still ready to give that protection in whatever was lawful. In this act, discarding all else, they have forced upon the country, the distinct issue: “Immediate dissolution or blood.”

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12 Lincoln here added the phrase “on that occasion” (Seward).

And this issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man the question, whether a Constitutional republic, or a<sup>13</sup> democracy — a government of

the people, by the same people — can, or cannot, maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes. It presents the question, whether discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration, according to organic law, in any case, can always, upon the pretences made in this case, or on any other pretences, or arbitrarily, without any pretence, break up their government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth. It forces us to ask: “Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness?” “Must a government, of necessity, be too *strong* for the liberties of its own people, or too *weak* to maintain its own existence?”

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13 Lincoln here added “Constitutional republic, or a”.

So viewing the issue, no choice was left but to call out the war power of the government; and so to resist force, employed for its destruction, by force, for its preservation.

The call was made, and the response of the country was most gratifying; surpassing in unanimity, and spirit, the most sanguine expectation. Yet, none of the States commonly called slave States, except Delaware,<sup>14</sup> gave a regiment through regular State organization. A few regiments have been organized within some others<sup>15</sup> of these States by individual enterprise, and received into the government service. Of course, the seceded States, so called, (and to which Texas had been joined about the time of the inauguration,) gave no troops to the cause of the Union. The border States, so called, were not uniform in their action; some of them being almost *for* the Union while in<sup>16</sup> others — as Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas — were apparently *quite* against it. the Union sentiment was nearly silenced, and repressed, and silenced.<sup>17</sup> The course taken in Virginia was the most remarkable — perhaps the most important. A convention, elected by the people of that State to consider this very question of disrupting the Federal Union, was in session at the capital of Virginia when Fort Sumter fell. To this body the people had chosen a large majority of *professed* Union men. Almost immediately after the fall of Sumter, many members of that majority went over to the original disunion minority, and, with them, adopted an ordinance for withdrawing the State from the Union. Whether this change was wrought by their great approval of the assault upon Sumter, or their great resentment at the government's resistance to that assault, is not definitely known. Although they submitted the ordinance, for ratification, to a vote of the people, to be taken on a day then<sup>18</sup> somewhat more than a month distant, the convention, and the legislature, (which was also in session at the same time and place,) with leading men of the State, not members of either, immediately commenced acting as if the State was were already out of the Union. They pushed military preparations vigorously forward all over the State. They seized the United States armory at Harper's Ferry, and the navy yard at Gosport, near Norfolk. They received — perhaps



invited — into their State large bodies of troops, with their warlike appointments, from the so-called seceded States. They formally entered into a treaty of temporary alliance, and co-operation with the so-called “Confederate States” of America,”<sup>19</sup> and sent members to their Congress at Montgomery. And, finally, they permitted the insurrectionary government to be transferred to their capital at Richmond.

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14 Lincoln here added “except Delaware,” (Seward).

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15 Lincoln here added “others”.

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16 Lincoln here added “in”.

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17 Lincoln struck the preceding and substituted “the Union sentiment was nearly silenced, and repressed, and silenced.”

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18 Lincoln here added “then”.

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19 Striking “of America” was suggested by Seward.

The people of Virginia have thus allowed this giant insurrection to make its nest within her borders; and this government has no choice left but to deal with it *where* it finds it. And it has the less regret, as the loyal citizens have, in due form, claimed its protection. Those loyal citizens, this government is bound to recognize, and protect, as being Virginia.

In the border States, so called — in fact, the middle States — there are those who favor a policy which they call “armed neutrality:” that is, an arming of those States to prevent the Union forces passing one way, or the disunion the other, over their soil. This would be disunion consummated. completed.<sup>20</sup> Figuratively speaking, it would be the building of an impassable wall along the line of separation — and yet, not quite an impassable one; for, under the guise of neutrality, it would tie the hands of the Union men, and freely pass supplies from among them to the insurrectionists, which it could not do as an open enemy. At a stroke, it would take all the trouble off the hands of secession, except only what proceeds from the external blockade. It would do for the disunionists that which, of all things, they most desire — feed them well, and give them disunion without a struggle of their own. It recognizes no fidelity to the Constitution, no obligation to maintain the Union; and while they may not all be traitors who have favored it, the thing is, in fact, treason in disguise.<sup>21</sup> very many who have favored it are, doubtless, loyal citizens, it is, nevertheless, treason in effect,



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20 Lincoln here substituted “completed” for “consummated.”

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21 Lincoln replaced the preceding deleted passage with the text that follows, all of which, except the word “doubtless,” was suggested by Seward.

Recurring to the action of the government, it may be stated that, at first, a call was made for seventy-five thousand militia; and rapidly following this, a proclamation was issued for closing the ports of the insurrectionary districts by proceedings in the nature of blockade. So far all was believed to be strictly legal. At this point the insurrectionists announced their purpose to enter upon the practice of privateering. On more mature reflection, with observation on current events, it was concluded that the measures adopted, were inadequate to the occasion; both by reason of the very limited time the militia would be held to serve, and the general insufficiency of numbers, in the regular land and naval forces. Accordingly another call was made for vol-<sup>22</sup> Other calls were made for volunteers, to serve three years, unless sooner discharged; and also for large additions to the regular army and navy. These measures, whether strictly legal or not, were ventured upon, under what appeared to be a popular demand, and a public necessity; trusting, then as now, that Congress would readily ratify them. It is believed that nothing has been done beyond the constitutional competency of Congress.

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22 At Seward's suggestion, Lincoln here deleted the preceding passage and substituted “Other calls were made for vol-”, the conclusion of the word “volunteers” being on the line below. He at first struck the passage and wrote in the margin “Other calls for vol”; he then struck this and covered the stricken passage with a slip and wrote on it “Other calls were made for vol-”.

Whether the proceedings in the nature of blockade, be technically a blockade, scarcely needs to be considered; since foreign nations only claim what we concede, that, as between them and us, the strict law of blockade shall apply.

The attention of Congress is sought in aid of this means for suppressing the insurrection, as the one affording at once the greatest efficiency, and least danger to life, of any at the control of the government.<sup>23</sup>

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23 Deleting the two preceding paragraphs was the suggestion of Seward.

Soon after the first call for militia, it was considered a duty to authorize the commanding general, in proper cases, according to his discretion, to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus; or, in other words, to arrest and detain, without resort to the ordinary processes and forms of law,

such individuals as he might deem dangerous to the public safety. This authority has purposely been exercised but very sparingly. Nevertheless, the legality and propriety of what has been done under it are questioned, and the attention of the country has been called to the proposition that one who is sworn to “take care that the laws be faithfully executed,” should not himself violate them. Of course some consideration was given to the questions of power, and propriety, before this matter was acted upon. The whole of the laws which were required to be faithfully executed, were being resisted, and failing of execution in nearly one-third of the States,. must Must they be allowed to finally fail of execution, even had it been perfectly clear, that by the use of the means necessary to their execution, some single law, made in such extreme tenderness of the citizen's liberty, that practically, it relieves more of the guilty, than of the innocent, should, to a very limited extent, be violated? To state the question more directly, are all the laws *but one* to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated? Even in such a case, would not the official oath be broken, if the government should be overthrown, when it was believed that disregarding the single law, would tend to preserve it? But it was not believed that this question was presented. It was not believed that any law was violated. The provision of the Constitution that “the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended unless when, in cases of rebellion or invasion, the public safety may require it,” is equivalent to a provision — is a provision — that such privilege may be suspended when, in cases of rebellion or invasion, the public safety *does* require it. It was decided that we have a case of rebellion, and that the public safety does require the qualified suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus which was authorized to be made. Now it is insisted that Congress, and not the Executive, is vested with this power. But the Constitution itself is silent as to which, or who, is to exercise the power; and as the provision was plainly made for a dangerous emergency, it cannot be believed that the framers of the instrument intended, that in every case, the danger should run its course, until Congress could be called together; the very assembling of which might be prevented, as was intended in this case, by the rebellion.

No more extended argument is now offered; as an opinion, at some length, will probably be presented by the Attorney General. Whether there shall be any legislation upon the subject, and if any, what, is submitted entirely to the better judgment of Congress.

The forbearance of this government had been so extraordinary, and so long continued, as to lead some foreign nations to shape their action as if they supposed the early destruction of our National Union was probable. While this, on discovery, gave the Executive some concern, he is now happy to say he finds no cause of complaint against the present course, of any foreign power, upon this the subject, of our domestic difficulty—<sup>24</sup> that the sovereignty, and rights of the United States, are now everywhere practically respected by foreign powers; and a general sympathy with the country is manifested throughout the world.

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24 Lincoln first revised, then deleted the preceding passage, covering it over with a slip, on which he substituted the text that follows, which was suggested by Seward.

The reports of the Secretaries of the Treasury, War, and the Navy, will give the information in detail deemed necessary, and convenient for your deliberation, and action; while the Executive, and all the departments, will stand ready to supply omissions, or to communicate new facts, considered important for you to know.

It is now recommended that you give the legal means for making this contest a short, and a<sup>25</sup> decisive one; that you authorize to be applied to the work at least — — hundred thousand men; and three hundred<sup>26</sup> place at the control of the government, for the work, at least four hundred thousand men, and four<sup>27</sup> hundred millions of dollars. That number of men is less than one-twelfth<sup>28</sup> about one tenth of those of proper ages within the regions where, apparently, *all* are willing to engage; and the sum is less than a thirtieth<sup>29</sup> twentythird part of the money value owned by the men who seem ready to devote the whole. A debt of six hundred millions of dollars *now*, is a less sum per head, than was the debt of our revolution when we came out of that struggle; and the money value in the country now, bears even a greater proportion to what it was *then*, than does the population. Surely each man has as strong a motive *now*, to *preserve* our liberties, as each had *then*, to *establish* them.

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25 Lincoln inserted the word "a" at this point.

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26 Lincoln struck the preceding passage and substituted the wording that follows.

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27 Seward suggested the figure of four hundred thousand.

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28 Lincoln struck the preceding phrase and substituted "about one tenth".

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29 Lincoln struck this word and substituted the one that follows.

A right result, at this time, will be worth more to the world than ten times the men, and ten times the money. it will cost. The evidence reaching us from the country, leaves no doubt, that the material for the work is abundant; and that it needs only the hand of legislation to give it legal sanction, and the hand of the Executive to give it practical shape and efficiency. One of the greatest perplexities of the

government is to avoid receiving troops faster than it can provide for them. In a word, the people will save their government, if the government itself, will do its part, only indifferently well.

It might seem, at first thought, to be of little difference whether the present movement at the South be called "secession" or "rebellion." The movers, however, well understand the difference. At the beginning, they knew they could never raise their treason to any respectable magnitude by any name which implies *violation* of law. They knew their people possessed as much of moral sense, as much of devotion to law and order, and as much pride in, and reverence for, the history and government of their common country, as any other civilized and patriotic people. They knew they could make no advancement directly in the teeth of these strong and noble sentiments. Accordingly they commenced by an insidious debauching of the public mind. They invented an ingenious sophism, which, if conceded, was followed by perfectly logical steps, through all the incidents, to the complete destruction of the Union. The sophism itself was, and is, that any State of the Union may, *consistently* with the national Constitution, and therefore *lawfully*, and *peacefully*, withdraw from the Union, without the consent of the Union, or of any other State. The little disguise that the supposed right is to be exercised only for just cause, themselves to be the sole judge of its justice, is too thin to merit any notice.

With rebellion thus sugar-coated, they have been drugging the public mind of their section for more than thirty years; and until at length they have brought many good men to a willingness to take up arms against the government the day *after* some assemblage of men have enacted the farcical pretence of taking their State out of the Union, who could have been brought to no such thing the day *before*.

This sophism derives much, perhaps the whole, of its currency from the assumption that there is some omnipotent and sacred supremacy pertaining to a *State* — to each State of our Federal Union. Our States have neither more, nor less power, than that reserved to them, in the Union, by the Constitution — no one of them ever having been a State *out* of the Union. The original ones passed into the Union even *before* they cast off their British colonial dependence; and the new ones each came into the Union directly from a condition of dependence, excepting Texas. And even Texas, in its temporary independence, was never designated a State. The new ones only took the designation of States, on coming into the Union, while that name was first adopted for the old ones, in and by the Declaration of Independence. Therein the "United Colonies" were declared to be "free and independent States;" but, even then, the object plainly was not to declare their independence of *one another*, or of the *Union*; but directly the contrary, as their mutual pledge, and their mutual action, before, at the time, and afterwards, abundantly show. The express plighting of faith, by each and all of the original thirteen, in the Articles of Confederation, two years later, that the Union shall be

perpetual, is most conclusive. Having never been States, either in substance or in name, *outside* of the Union, whence this magical omnipotence of "State rights," asserting a claim of power to lawfully destroy the Union itself? Much is said about the "sovereignty" of the States; but the word, even, is not in the national Constitution; nor, as is believed, in any of the State constitutions. What is a "sovereignty," in the political sense of the term? Would it be far wrong to define it, "A political community, without a political superior?" Tested by this, no one of our States, except Texas, ever was a sovereignty. And even Texas gave up the character on coming into the Union; by which act, she acknowledged the Constitution of the United States, and the laws and treaties of the United States made in pursuance of the Constitution, to be, for her, the supreme law of the land. The States have their *status* IN the Union, and they have no other legal *status*. If they break from this, they can only do so against law, and by revolution. The Union, and not themselves separately, procured their independence and their liberty. By conquest, or purchase, the Union gave each of them, whatever of independence and liberty it has. The Union is older than any of the States, and, in fact, it created them as States. As states, the Union gave birth to them. Originally some dependent colonies made the Union, and, in turn, the Union threw off their old dependence, for them,<sup>30</sup> and made them States, such as they are. Not one of them ever had a State constitution independent of the Union. Of course, it is not forgotten that all the new States framed their constitutions before they entered the Union; nevertheless, dependent upon, and preparatory to, coming into the Union.

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30 Lincoln here inserted "for them,".

Unquestionably the States have the powers and rights reserved to them in and by the national Constitution; but among those, these,<sup>31</sup> surely, are not included all conceivable powers, however mischievous or destructive; but, at most, such only as were known in the world, at the time, as governmental powers; and certainly a power to destroy the government itself had never been known as a governmental — as a merely administrative power. This relative matter of national power, and State rights, as a principle, is no other than the principle of *generality* and *locality*. Whatever concerns the whole, should be confided to the whole — to the general government; while whatever concerns *only* the State, should be left exclusively to the State. This is all there is of original principle about it. Whether the national Constitution, in defining boundaries between the two, has applied the principle with exact accuracy, is not to be questioned. We are all bound by that defining, without question.

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31 Lincoln here substituted "these" for "those".

What is now combatted, is the position that secession is *consistent* with the Constitution — is *lawful*, and *peaceful*. It is not contended that there is any express law for it; and nothing should ever be

implied as law, which leads to unjust or absurd consequences. The nation purchased, with money, the countries out of which several of these States were formed. Is it just that they shall go off without leave, and without refunding? The nation paid very large sums, (in the aggregate, I believe nearly a hundred millions,) to relieve Florida of the aboriginal tribes. Is it just that she shall now be off without consent, or without making any return? The nation is now in debt for money applied to the benefit of these so-called seceding States, in common with the rest. Is it just, either that the creditors shall go unpaid, or the remaining States pay the whole? A part of the present national debt was contracted to pay the old debts of Texas. Is it just that she shall leave, and pay no part of this herself?

Again, if one State may secede, so may another; and when all shall have seceded, none is left to pay the debts. Is this quite just to creditors? Did we notify them of this sage view of ours, when we borrowed their money? If we now recognize this doctrine, by allowing the seceders to go in peace, it is difficult to see what we can do, if others choose to go, or to extort terms upon which they will promise to remain.

The seceders insist that our Constitution admits of secession. They have assumed to make a national constitution of their own, in which, of necessity, they have either *discarded* or *retained* the right of secession, as, they insist, it exists in ours. If they have discarded it, they thereby admit that, on principle, it ought not to be in ours. If they have retained it, by their own construction of ours they show that they will to be consistent they must<sup>32</sup> secede from one another, whenever they shall find it the easiest way of settling their debts, or effecting any other selfish or unjust object. The principle itself is one of disintegration, and upon which no government can possibly endure.

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32 After striking "they will," Lincoln substituted "to be consistent they must".

If all the States, save one, should assert the power to *drive* that one out of the Union, it is presumed the whole class of seceder politicians would at once deny the power, and denounce the act as the greatest outrage upon State rights. But suppose that precisely the same act, instead of being called "driving the one out," should be called "the seceding of the others from that one," it would be exactly what the seceders claim to do; unless, indeed, they make the point, that the one, because it is a minority, may rightfully do what the others, because they are a majority, may not rightfully do. These politicians are subtle, and profound, on the rights of minorities. The dread of their existence, is<sup>33</sup> They are not partial to that power which made the Constitution, and speaks from the preamble, calling itself "We, the People."

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33 Lincoln struck the preceding passage and substituted "They are not partial to".

It may well be questioned whether there is, to-day, a majority of the legally qualified voters of any State, except perhaps<sup>34</sup> South Carolina, in favor of disunion. There is much reason to believe that the Union men are the majority in many, if not in every other one, of the so-called seceded States. The contrary has not been demonstrated in any one of them. It is ventured to affirm this, even of Virginia and Tennessee; for the result of an election, held in military camps, where the bayonets are all on one side of the question voted upon, can scarcely be considered as demonstrating popular sentiment. At such an election, all that large class who are, at once, *for* the Union, and *against* coercion, would be coerced to vote against the Union.

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34 Lincoln here inserted "perhaps"(Seward).

It may be affirmed, without extravagance, that the free institutions we enjoy have developed the powers, and improved the condition, of our whole people, beyond any example in the world. Of this we now have a striking, and an impressive illustration. So large an army as the government has now on foot, was never before known, without a soldier in it, but who had taken his place there, of his own free choice. But more than this: there are many single regiments whose members, one and another, possess full practical knowledge of all the arts, sciences, professions, and whatever else, whether useful or elegant, is known in the world; and there is scarcely one, from which there could not be selected, a President, a Cabinet, a Congress, and perhaps a Court, abundantly competent to administer the government itself! Nor do I know that<sup>35</sup> say this is not true, also, in the army of our late friends, now adversaries, in this contest; but if it is, so much better the reason why the government, which has conferred such benefits on both them and us, should not be broken up. Whoever, in any section, proposes to abandon such a government, would do well to consider, in deference to what principle it is that he does it — what better he is likely to get in its stead — whether the substitute will give, or be intended to give, so much of good to the people. There are some foreshadowings on this subject. Our adversaries have adopted some declarations<sup>36</sup> of independence; in which, unlike the good old one, penned by Jefferson, they omit the words "all men are created equal." Why? They have adopted a temporary national constitution, in the preamble of which, unlike our good old one, signed by Washington, they omit "We, the people," and substitute "We, the deputies of the sovereign and independent States." Why? Why this deliberate pressing out of view, the rights of men, and the authority of the people?

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35 Lincoln substituted "know that" for "say" (Seward).

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36 Lincoln here changed "declaration" to "declarations".



This is essentially a People's contest. On the side of the Union, it is a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form and substance of government, whose leading object is, to elevate the condition of men — to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford all, an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life. Yielding to partial and temporary departures, from necessity, this is the leading object of the government for whose existence we contend.

I am most happy to believe that the plain people understand and appreciate this. It is worthy of note, that while in this, the government's hour of trial, large numbers of those in the army and navy who have been favored with the offices, have resigned, and played proved<sup>37</sup> false to the very hand which had pampered them, not one common soldier, or common sailor, has is known to have<sup>38</sup> deserted his flag.

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37 Lincoln here substituted “proved” for “played”.

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38 Lincoln here struck “has” and substituted “is known to have”.

Greater honor is due to those officers who remained true, despite the example of their treacherous associates; but the greatest honor, and most important fact of all, is the unanimous firmness of the common soldiers, and common sailors. To the last man, so far as known,<sup>39</sup> they have successfully resisted the traitorous efforts of those whose commands, but an hour before, they obeyed as absolute law. This is the patriotic instinct of plain people. They understand, without an argument, that the

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39 Lincoln here inserted “so far as known,”.

Our popular government has often been called an experiment. Two points in it our people have already settled — the successful *establishing* and the successful *administering* of it. One still remains — the it's successful *maintenance* of it,<sup>40</sup> against a formidable attempt to overthrow it. It is now for them to demonstrate to the world, that those who can fairly carry an election, can also suppress a rebellion; that ballots are the rightful, and peaceful, successors of bullets; and that when ballots have fairly, and constitutionally decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets; that there can be no successful appeal, except to ballots themselves, at succeeding elections. Such will be a great lesson of peace; teaching men that what they cannot take by an election, neither can they take it by a war; teaching all, the folly of being the beginners of a war.

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40 Lincoln here revised “the successful *maintenance* of it” to “it’s successful *maintenance*”.

Lest there be some uneasiness in the minds of candid men, as to what is to be the course of the government, towards the southern States, *after* the rebellion shall have been suppressed, the Executive deems it proper to say, it will be his purpose then, as ever, to be guided by the Constitution and the laws; and that he probably will have no different understanding of the powers and duties of the federal government relative relatively<sup>41</sup> to the rights of the States, and the people, under the Constitution, than that expressed in the inaugural address:

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41 Lincoln here changed “relative” to “relatively”.

He desires to preserve the government, that it may be administered for all, as it was administered by the men who made it. Loyal citizens everywhere, have the right to claim this of their government; and the government has no right to withhold, or neglect it. It is not perceived that, in giving it, there is any coercion, any conquest, or any subjugation, which any honest man should regret.<sup>42</sup> in any just sense of those terms.

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42 Lincoln struck the preceding passage, as suggested by Seward, but in substituting the text that follows he ignored Seward’s suggested wording.

The Constitution provides, and all the States have accepted the provision, that “The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government.” But, if a State may lawfully go out of the Union, having done so, it may also discard the republican form of government; so that to prevent it’s going out, is an indispensable means, to the end, of maintaining the guaranty mentioned; and when an end is lawful and obligatory, the indispensable means to it, are also lawful, and obligatory—<sup>43</sup>

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43 The preceding paragraph was added by Lincoln at the bottom of the page.

It was with the deepest regret that the Executive found the duty of employing the war-power, in defence of the government, forced upon him. He could but perform this duty, or surrender the existence of the government. No compromise, by public servants, could, in this case, be a cure; not that compromises are not often proper, but that no popular government can long survive a marked precedent, that those who carry an election, can only save the government from immediate destruction, by giving up the main point, upon which, the people gave the election. The people themselves, and not their servants, can safely reverse their own deliberate decisions.

As a private citizen, he the Executive<sup>44</sup> could not have consented that these institutions shall perish; much less could he, in betrayal of so vast, and so sacred a trust, as these free people had confided to him. He felt that he had no moral right to shrink; nor even to count the chances of his own life, in what might follow. In full view of his great responsibility, he has, so far, done what he has deemed his duty. You will now, according to your own judgment, perform yours. He sincerely hopes that your views, and your action, may so accord with his, as to assure all faithful citizens, who have been disturbed in their rights, of a certain, and speedy restoration to them, under the Constitution and the laws.

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44 Lincoln here struck "he" and substituted "the Executive".

And having thus chosen our course, without guile, and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear, and with manly hearts.

Abraham Lincoln

July 4, 1861<sup>45</sup>

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45 Lincoln here signed his full name and added the date at which the address was to be presented to Congress. When he composed this draft is not precisely known, but he was reported by his friend Orville H. Browning to have finished working on it on July 3.